

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1048

By Hardaway

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Fred L. Davis of  
Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Fred L. Davis; and

WHEREAS, Fred Davis was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, born in Memphis on May 8, 1934, Fred L. Davis worked in the cotton fields and held a variety of jobs, including as a waiter at The Peabody in Memphis, before he graduated from Manassas High School in 1953; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Davis received his Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Memphis, and he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from Tennessee State University in 1957, having worked in a meatpacking plant in Chicago, Illinois, during the summer to pay his tuition; and

WHEREAS, in 1957, Fred Davis was joined in holy matrimony with the love of his life, Ella Josephine Davis; Mrs. Davis would become the first African-American woman to earn a Master of Business Administration degree from the University of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, a veteran of the United States Army, Fred Davis rendered sterling service to his country while stationed in France for two years, where he was assigned to the U.S. Army comptroller's office; and

WHEREAS, returning to Memphis after completing his military service, he would work as a state auditor and county register librarian before entering the insurance industry, where he

became the first African-American independent insurance broker in six states, including Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri, and Kentucky; and

WHEREAS, in 1967, Mr. Davis opened the Fred L. Davis Insurance Agency in Orange Mound, one of the first African-American-owned insurance agencies in the South; through the years, the business grew from a small office to a powerhouse of sales, widely respected in the Memphis community; and

WHEREAS, a staunch civil rights activist and defender of democracy for all, Fred Davis, in 1968, won election to the first Memphis City Council; he became the first African American to chair the council in 1972, and completed twelve years as a member of that exemplary body; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Davis was chairman of the Public Works Committee during the sanitation workers strike of 1968; he advocated for a pay raise, improved working conditions, and the union recognition for which they fought; and

WHEREAS, Fred Davis marched beside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in support of the workers, and he was sitting on the side of the stage when Dr. King made his legendary "Mountaintop" speech on April 3, 1968, at Mason Temple. He attended Dr. King's funeral, representing the City of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, always seeking to serve his community, Fred Davis was a founding director and past president of the Mid-South Minority Business Council, which he established in an effort to expand and promote business opportunities for minority businesses across Memphis and the Shelby County area; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Davis dedicated his time and energies to a number of civic organizations; he served as the founding director of the Assisi Foundation, as a trustee of the Community Foundation, and as a director of the Memphis Leadership Foundation; he was a past president of the University of Memphis Society, the Orange Mound Civic Club, and the Liberty Bowl; and

WHEREAS, as a wonderful tribute to his mother, Mr. Davis had recently established Charity's House, a community resource center to provide a variety of services to those in need in his community; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, he was inducted into the Society of Entrepreneurs and received the Humanitarian of the Year Award from the National Council of Christians and Jews and the Communicator of the Year Award from the Public Relations Society; and

WHEREAS, he was an active and devout member of Beulah Baptist Church, which he served faithfully for many years as a deacon and head of the board of trustees; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Davis was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Fred Davis enjoyed the loving companionship of his beloved wife, Ella Davis, and was the proud parent of Michael Davis, Marvin Davis, and Sheila Davis; and

WHEREAS, Fred Davis leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Fred L. Davis, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Davis.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.